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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: HURRICANE KATRINA

1. Summary: Amid the extensive coverage September 7 of a corruption scandal involving a local prosecutor and the aftermath of a recent riot by Thai workers in Kaohsiung, almost all major Chinese-language Taipei dailies reported that the U.S. arms procurement bill was blocked by the Pan-Blue legislative caucuses again Tuesday. The Chinese-language newspapers, however, also carried news stories saying KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou and Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng both agreed Tuesday evening to let the Pan-Blue legislators review the U.S. arms procurement bill soon.

2. All the Chinese-language Taipei dailies also carried wire service stories in their inside pages regarding the situation in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In addition, columnist Lin Poh-wen commented in the centrist "China Times" on the Bush administration's incompetence in responding quickly and effectively to disasters and relieving the victims. Lin said Hurricane Katrina has blown away the mask of the United States and exposed many ugly aspects of the United States under Bush's leadership. A separate commentary in the conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" also compared Baghdad with New Orleans and asked the American people if they have ever thought of the hunger and rage of the people in Baghdad. End summary.

A) "Hurricane Katrina Blows down the Signboard of [President] Bush's Empire"

Columnist Lin Poh-wen commented in the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (9/7):

"Hundreds of thousands of black victims [of Hurricane Katrina] are now in an abyss of suffering caused by the 'flood,' while [U.S. President George W.] Bush and his careless team that have failed to respond efficiently to the disaster are now suffering from a 'heated' political wound. This is the image of today's United States of America. .

"Hurricane Katrina has exposed many ugly aspects of the United States under Bush's leadership. Bush has been publicly promoting imperialism to the outside world, while in the meantime, he has been secretly encouraging racism inside the United States. The federal government's sluggishness in relieving the victims as well as the Department of Homeland Security's and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's incompetence to respond quickly and effectively to disasters are not simply a question of ability and bureaucracy but a real problem caused by racial and hierarchical ideology. Bush and his administration are clearly aware that the blacks are not voters for the Republican Party, and above all, the blacks in the South are poor and weak and they have neither power nor prestige. How will the lofty white people ever care about them? In the white people's hearts, the black are never one among them, [and this has been true] from the Civil War in the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century when Reverend Martin Luther King bellowed 'I have a dream' and 'we shall overcome.' But the cruel fact is that the life, situation and status of the black people have hardly improved; every new minority immigrating to the United States has done better economically. King's 'dream' remains a dream unrealized.

"The hurricane has blown away the mask of the United States. The world has suddenly come to realize that the United States has two different faces and two special ranks - one of the white, rich and prestigious, and the other of the black, poor and underprivileged. .

"Hurricane Katrina has ravaged Bush's political career, unveiling to the world the hypocritical and incompetent aspect of the Republican Party. But unfortunately, it is the hundreds of thousands of victims that have become their sacrificial lamb."

B) "From Baghdad to New Orleans"

The "Black and White" column of the conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] noted (9/5):

"The city of New Orleans, which has been severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina, has stunned both the Americans and the world; people are asking: How come this superpower [of the United States] looks so similar to an African country at war?

"The question does not lie in the devastation of the hurricane and flooding, nor does it have anything to do with the ratio of the black or the poor in the city. The question lies in the Bush administration's incompetence to warn [the people] and respond to disasters efficiently. As a result, the hungry victims have turned into mobs that rob everyone and everything, and the delightful and beautiful city of jazz has turned into a perished city of no order at all. It is no wonder that the [American] soldiers that have just returned from Iraq and been sent to New Orleans felt as though they have returned to Baghdad again. .

"The disorderly city of New Orleans has made the U.S. government realize that hungry people could turn into outrageous people. Now, will the American people also think of the hunger and rage of the people in Baghdad?"

KEEGAN